



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Senate passes bill recognizing dangers of cyber bullying *SB 240 requires schools to develop policies prohibiting intimidation*

SALEM – Legislation that defines “cyber bullying” and directs school districts to come up with specific policies to deal with the issue passed in the Oregon Senate this morning. If signed into law, Senate Bill 240 would put Oregon amongst the leading six states that have proactive school policies regarding bullying and cyber bullying.

“Cyber bullying is a more recent trend, but it has serious real-life consequences for the children that are continuously harassed during school hours and after,” said Senator Joanne Verger (D-District 5), chief sponsor of the bill. “Senate Bill 240 would create an active approach to reducing the detrimental outcomes associated with cyber bullying that reach into the real world.”

In her floor speech, Verger cited a high profile incident of a Massachusetts teenager who took her own life last year after being tormented online. During Verger’s committee testimony, she referred to an earlier incident in 2006 where a 13-year-old Missouri girl committed suicide after being misled and then harassed over the internet. That incident prompted many states, included Oregon, to look more closely at the consequences of online harassment.

“Too many children wake up every morning fearing the day ahead because of the harassment that waits for them at school,” said Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham). “We must take cyber bullying very seriously because we have seen it can have very serious consequences. This bill recognizes cyber bullying as inappropriate behavior that must be reported to prevent further suffering to a child.”

SB 240 requires school employers to act as mandatory reporters of harassment, including cyber bullying. It also allows a student to report bullying anonymously to a mandatory reporter. The National Crime Prevention Council reports that bullying is a problem that affects half of all American teenagers.

The bill now goes to the House for consideration.

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